

SENATE RESOLUTION 42

By Massey

A RESOLUTION to recognize Jim Vlna on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those citizens who have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm throughout their years of industry; and

WHEREAS, Jim Vlna is one such estimable person who served with distinction for more than twenty years with the Knoxville Zoo, before taking a much deserved retirement on December 31, 2013, and drawing to a close his fifty-year zoo career; and

WHEREAS, Jim Vlna first arrived at the Knoxville Zoo in 1991. With twenty-nine years of experience at Brookfield Zoo in Chicago, Mr. Vlna possessed a wealth of zoo knowledge and a tireless work ethic; and

WHEREAS, initially tapped to be a consultant by then-director Ted Beattie, who had also come to Knoxville by way of Brookfield Zoo, Jim Vlna soon joined the zoo staff full time as director of operations; and

WHEREAS, when Patrick Roddy assumed the role of executive director in the mid-nineties, Mr. Vlna was promoted to the position of deputy director, and in 2000, in a unanimous vote by the zoo's board of directors, Jim Vlna was chosen to succeed Mr. Roddy as executive director; and

WHEREAS, the reason Jim Vlna came to the Knoxville Zoo, and what remained his focus throughout his career, was to change the way guests encountered animals and experienced the zoo. During his tenure, more than \$25 million was invested in new habitats and recreational activities, encompassing thirty-nine capital improvement projects that many of the Knoxville Zoo members have watched come to fruition; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Vlna's professional achievements at the Knoxville Zoo include the Pilot Traveling Exhibit Building, the Lucille S. Thompson Family Foundation Black Bear Falls, the

Stokely African Elephant Preserve, the Clayton Family Kids Cove, the Boyd Family Red Panda Village, the Clayton Family Safari Splash, and The Valley of the Kings, featuring the Ann and John Schaad Family Lion Courtyard; and

WHEREAS, under Jim Vlna's leadership, the Knoxville Zoo saw the highest attendance years in the zoo's history, welcoming on average 400,000 guests each year and securing Knoxville Zoo's position as the largest year-round attraction in Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, fortunately, the groundwork Mr. Vlna laid for future projects will keep the momentum going for the next generation of zoo leadership. Construction is scheduled soon on the zoo's Tiger Forest habitat, which will enable Knoxville Zoo to begin an important breeding program for critically endangered Malayan tigers, and 2013 will include new zoo experiences that were all part of Mr. Vlna's vision of giving zoo-goers new experiences; Mr. Vlna also initiated the planning for a much-needed and anticipated reptile facility to come in a few years; and

WHEREAS, Jim Vlna leaves a legacy not only as a man who saw the importance of the Knoxville Zoo as an educational and cultural resource for our area, but as a mentor who never hesitated to give credit to his staff for the zoo's accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Jim Vlna exemplifies the spirit and allegiance to family and community that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Mr. Vlna has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of colleagues; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we extend to Jim Vlna our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement and every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.